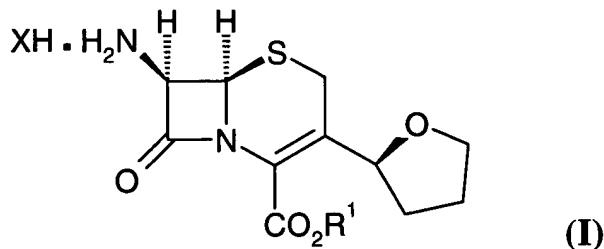


**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION**

The Abstract is found on page 44 of the Specification. An amended version of the Abstract was presented in the Preliminary Amendment that was filed with the Specification. Please cancel all prior versions of the Abstract and replace it with the following version:

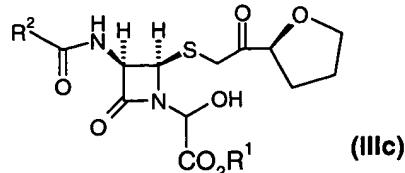
**ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**

A process for preparing a compound of formula (I):

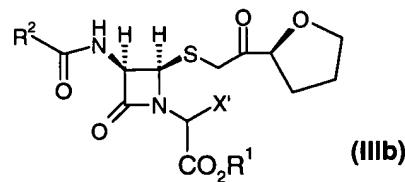


wherein R<sup>1</sup> is *para*-nitrobenzyl and X is halo, comprising the steps of:

a) reacting a compound of formula (IIIc):



wherein R<sup>1</sup> is as above and R<sup>2</sup> is C<sub>1-6</sub>alkyl, C<sub>6-10</sub>aryl, C<sub>6-10</sub>arylC<sub>1-6</sub>alkyl or dithianyl, with a halogenating agent, in a solvent and in the presence of a base, to form a compound of formula (IIIb):



wherein R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup>, and X' are as above;

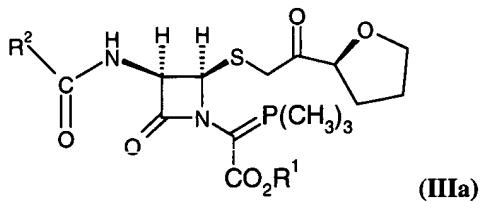
b) reacting the compound of formula (IIIb) with trimethylphosphine, in a solvent and in the presence of a base, to form a trimethylphosphinic compound of formula (IIIa):

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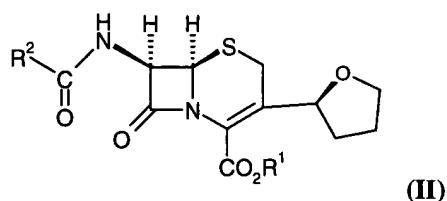
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Reply to Office action of December 21, 2004



wherein R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are as above;

c) cyclizing the compound of formula (IIIa) in a solvent to form a compound of formula (II):



wherein R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are as above; and

d) treating the compound of formula (II) with a Lewis acid of structure PX<sub>5</sub> wherein X is halo. Compounds useful in the processes of the invention are also provided.